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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 002704

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR AND WHA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/2014

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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU/VENEZUELA: SPEAKING OUT ON HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: STATE 223272

Classified By: POL Counselor Andrew Schofer for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) Summary: The Dutch share U.S. concerns about a deteriorating political and human rights situation in Venezuela, but as EU President are reluctant to voice criticism before consulting with other EU members. The EU does not plan to discuss a collective post-referendum strategy toward Venezuela formally until November 16, but the issue could come up under "other business" at an October 19 internal working party meeting. End Summary.

12. (C) Poloff delivered ref message to Venezuela desk officer Dimitri Vogelaar on October 18. Vogelaar replied that the Dutch and EU remain concerned about the situation in Venezuela, which he agreed appears to be deteriorating after the referendum. Vogelaar noted that Chavez appears to have waited until after the referendum to "go after" the opposition. Vogelaar added that the Dutch would add a fourth concern to ref tel list: the politicization of the Tribunal Suprema de Justicia, the highest legislative body in Venezuela, to which he said Chavez has appointed several Chavista justices.

EU to Strategize November 16

13. (C) Vogelaar said that EU Heads of Mission in Caracas are scheduled to provide the EU internal COLAT meeting on November 16 with their analyses of the post-referendum situation and recommendations for the path forward. Vogelaar did not expect any significant EU action prior to that meeting. After Poloff pressed that November 16 was too late for the decision on Sumate leaders, Vogelaar acknowledged that separate coordinated statements before November were "always a possibility." While Venezuela is not on the agenda for the October 19 EU COLAT meeting, he added, the issue could always be raised under "other business." Vogelaar promised to discuss the situation with the Dutch Ambassador in Venezuela and others.

Dutch Ready to Respond

14. (C) Vogelaar emphasized that the EU would certainly "respond" to a decision to arrest Sumate leaders, which he agreed "would be a a disaster" for Venezuelan democracy and human rights. Vogelaar appeared particularly concerned about ref tel information regarding a potential draft law criminalizing all foreign support for human rights and political expression, and said that if this is the case "there absolutely would be action." Regarding the draft media law, Vogelaar said the Dutch and EU had spoken out repeatedly criticizing the draft media law, which had been an issue of concern even before the referendum.
SOBEL